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CRAGGY GRANDEUR—View of Mineral King area, east of Visalia. Valley floor is over 7,800 feet high, some peaks exceed 12,000 feet

4 Mineral King Plans Offered for Public Comment

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ASH MOUNTAIN—Four alternative plans for the use of the controversial Mineral King area 55 miles east of Visalia in the Sierra Nevada have been drafted by the National Park Service.

But a high-rise ski resort is not one of them.

For 40 years developers have eyed the area with its alpine valley, mountain peaks and lakes and considered it the finest potential summer-winter resort in the West.

Last year that possibility was foreclosed by Congress and now Sequoia National Park Superintendent David D. Thompson said the public is being asked to comment on alternative plans that would:

A. Leave Mineral King as it is, modifying existing conditions only as required to meet minimum health and safety standards.

B. Rebuild the existing campground, build parking areas with specific capacities and open a walk-in campground, but generally maintain the present use patterns and levels.

C. Gradually eliminate visitor use facilities and Roads in the Mineral King Valley and reestablish them elsewhere so the valley can be restored to its natural state.

D. Expand public use by developing visitor access and visitor Facilities that include overnight lodging, stores and enlarged campgrounds.

Mineral King was a gold rush-era mining camp, reached by a crooked 25-mile wagon road that is still only partly paved. Until 1978, the primitive area was part of the U.S. national forest lands.

When the Forest Service proposed a major ski resort development in 1965 and Walt Disney Enterprises won the development rights, environmental protectionists, led by the Sierra Club, objected.

The resulting 13-year controversy was resolved when Congress passed legislation making the area a part of Sequoia National Park.

Under alternatives -A- and -B-, the Mineral King use patterns would not be changed much, officials said.

Alternative -C- would accelerate the removal of the cabins and other visitor facilities from the valley.

Park officials said they are presenting the -D- alternative for public comment but they acknowledged that any plan to build a major all-weather highway into the area would probably rekindle the controversy that caused Congress to bring the area into the park.

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